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# E X A S Travel Log

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS-PAN-AMERICAN

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE TEXAS TRAVEL INDUSTRY

## COMING UP

It's been three and a half years since Aquarena Springs in **San Marcos** was an amusement park featuring Ralph the Swimming Pig and underwater mermaid shows. When Southwest Texas State University bought the park, the new **Aquarena Center** moved swiftly and easily into its new role as a venue for natural science research and education. Soon the building, parking lot and visitors center may be razed to make way for a state-of-the-art educational and interpretive facility that would showcase the springs. The *Austin American-Statesman* reports the new **Texas Rivers Center at San Marcos Springs** would cost \$10 million as a joint effort of the university and Texas Parks and Wildlife. If approved, the center would tell the story of the fragile springs, which flow through one of the most important ecological areas in the world. Construction could start as early as next summer, with an opening date scheduled for the summer of 2002. Open daily, 9:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., at One Aquarena Springs Drive. Call 512/245-7534 for details. Admission is free.

Thanks to the **La Grange Chamber of Commerce**, the town's historic depot will be restored at its original location and converted into a first-class railroad museum. The chamber, which owns the depot, opted to sell the structure to the low bidder, a group of train enthusiasts and historic preservationists who call themselves the **Friends of the La Grange Railroad Depot**. An offer from a car dealership, which exceeded the low

bid by \$7,500, was rejected after the business revealed plans to relocate the depot and expand onto the resulting vacant lot. The Friends of the La Grange Railroad Depot will collaborate with the city in seeking a TEA-21 grant and in developing the depot as a civic facility and attraction. The structure was built around 1897 by the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, and stands one block north of the courthouse square at the corner of La Fayette and Washington streets. For details, call the chamber at 409/968-5756.

**Incredapark**, a new waterpark and family entertainment center, will open in **La Marque** late next spring. The East Texas Tourism Association reports the \$24 million, 42-acre attraction will be designed and managed by **Schlitterbahn** of New Braunfels, and built adjacent to Gulf Greyhound Park, the world's largest greyhound race-track.

A feasibility study is now under way for development of a major year-round **anchor attraction**

in **Arlington**. According to the Arlington C&VB, an extensive analysis of the current makeup of attractions in the Metroplex and a competitive analysis on the regional and national levels will determine the type of attraction that could turn the city into a year-round vacation, convention and meeting destination. For more information, call 817/265-7721.

## PLACES

The **Nacogdoches C&VB** pulled up stakes on North Street and opened new offices and a visitor center in the Historic Town Center, a landmark structure built in 1917. Executive director **Pam Fitch** said since the bureau's move to the city's downtown square, visitation has increased dramatically. Knowledgeable employees hand out brochures on area attractions and direct visitors to the myriad things to see and do. But what sets the new visitor center apart, Fitch said, is its 15-foot mural depicting scenes from one of Texas' oldest towns. Historical displays on Native Americans, Spanish explorers,

and Mexican and Anglo settlers offer a time line of the city's history and heritage. Open daily at 200 E. Main Street. Call 409/564-7351 for more info.

The **Upshur County Chamber of Commerce** moved a block up the street into larger quarters on **Gilmer's town square**. The staff now occupies the 100-year-old Central Building, which has served as both a grocery and hardware store. Open Monday through Friday at 106 Buffalo. For information, call 903/843-2413.

The old U.S. post office in **Hearne** was built in 1941 during the midst of a world war. Its combination of art deco and New Deal architecture made it the most modern building in town. The post office was abandoned in 1990. Now a couple of enterprising women have restored the building to its original blueprint design. **Linda McClymond** and **Cathy Strancer** transformed the government structure into a specialty business, appropriately named **Old Main Post Office Antiques and Art-**



**PICKED FOR PICKIN'** The folks that stage **Country Music U.S.A.** in Yoakum were handed the **Country Music Live Show Award for the third year in a row** by **Country Music Organizations of America**. In 1977, several Rotarians, who were also talented musicians, produced the show as a onetime fund-raising event to help pay for their many community projects. The group now entertains from 500 to 700 people every second Tuesday of each month. For show information, call the chamber at 361/293-2309.



TRAVEL TALES OVERHEARD

**works.** The 3,000-square-foot building showcases paintings, pottery and woodwork by local artists, and fine furniture, glassware and other antiques. A small art show will complement the town's annual Crossroads Sunflower Festival on September 25. At 302 S. Magnolia. Call 409/279-5919 for more info.

It was supposed to be finished last fall. A wonderfully funky European-style boardwalk set in a carnival atmosphere, with the perfection of Disney and a touch of class. But when tropical storm Frances hit a year ago it caused a bit of a delay. Now the finishing touches on **Kemah Boardwalk** has primed the attraction into becoming a premier family destination. The bayfront city hopes to double the number of visitors to the area from 2 million to 4 million a year. And that they may. The boardwalk and a major pedestrian corridor link the waterfront with a first-class nautical-themed hotel, retail and specialty shops, and several top restaurants, including Aquarium, an underwater dining adventure featuring a 50,000-gallon tank of tropical fish. All ages will delight in dancing fountains, street performers, carnival games, a classic carousel, a large Ferris wheel, and tours aboard a minia-

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is published monthly by the Texas Department of Transportation, Travel Division. Please send news items of interest to the Texas travel industry to Texas Travel Log, P.O. Box 141009, Austin, Texas 78714-1009. (512) 486-5874, FAX (512) 486-5879. Deadline for each newsletter is the 20th of the month preceding the issue date.

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**JUDGE ROY BEAN TIC** Manager Neal Billings said JP Janie McDonald from nearby Sanderson is "getting to be a regular around here." Wayne Callicoatte and Dee Ann Daniels from Houston recently tied the knot on the steps of the Jersey Lilly Saloon, bringing the total number of weddings

performed at the center to 22.

**ORANGE TIC** When a visitor picked up a pamphlet publicizing Charlie Pruitt's Country Music Show in Beaumont, counselors recognized her as one of the featured performers pictured in the brochure. Tricia Elliott, an up-

and-coming country/Western star, was making her way from her home in Rhode Island to perform at the Saturday night show. The singer was singled out as the best female vocalist at the International Star Music Awards, and won the 1998 King Eagle Award for Song of the Year.

ture replica of an 1863 Central Pacific train. The entertainment complex was developed by Landry's Seafood Restaurants Inc. Call 281/334-8902 for details.

The city of **Wichita Falls** once again welcomed almost as many visitors as it has residents during last month's **Dallas Cowboys** training camp at Midwestern State University. This is the second year Wichita Falls has hosted the team for the five-week summer workout. With the theme "The road to the Super Bowl begins in Wichita Falls," the Cowboys, no doubt, have this town's enthusiasm and support. A kickoff party drew an estimated 30,000 people for free food, drink, entertainment and a glimpse of some of the players. The western sector of the university's campus was turned into Cowboyland, with banners, VIP tents, refreshments, and a pro shop with souvenirs. With visitation nearing 100,000 and an economic impact of several million dollars, you can bet your cowboy boots that city and university officials are working to bring back the team next year.

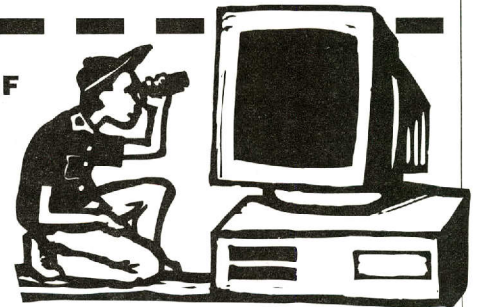
The battle continues over restrictions on long-haul flights from **Dallas Love Field**. The *Dallas Morning News* reports a National Research Council panel has recommended to Congress that the government eliminate legal restrictions to flights at the Dallas airport, as well as at New York's

La Guardia Airport and Washington Reagan National Airport. The report stems from efforts to improve airline competition, with hopes of increasing flights to small and medium communities and reducing airfares throughout the system. A 1980 federal law known as the Wright amendment permits flights from Love Field only to Texas and four adjoining states. A 1997 law added three more states. The issue of service at Love Field has prompted law-

suits for over a quarter century, *The News* said.

The **Plaza Theatre of Wax** in **San Antonio** has been heralded as one of the most entertaining wax museums in the world. Themed settings, such as Hollywood, horror, history and religion, showcase more than 225 startlingly lifelike figures. Now the likes of Kevin Costner, Whoopi Goldberg, Tom Hanks and Elvis Presley have been

**WHAT THE SURF BROUGHT IN**  
**The Texas Birds Record Committee has accepted a re-**



**ported sighting of a yellow-footed gull near Surfside Beach in Brazoria County, bringing the number of bird species documented in Texas to 616. An immature dark-backed gull was photographed by a Lake Jackson resident with a 22-year passion for birding. The Internet allowed examination of the photos by gull experts worldwide, several of whom prepared extensive written support of the bird's identification. The sighting of the gull, which is essentially of the Baja region, caused a stir within the close-knit international birding community.**



joined by more than 25 story-book characters and 25 American heroes. The magic of childhood is re-created at the all-new **Children's Land of Make Believe**, where visitors can finally come face-to-face with Cinderella, Pinocchio, Peter Pan, Sleeping Beauty and other long-time favorites. Native Americans, George Washington, Betsy Ross and Abraham Lincoln reveal the 100-year history of America's struggle toward sovereignty at a new themed area entitled **Freedom's Journey**. Open daily at 301 Alamo Plaza, across from the Alamo. For info on private receptions and groups rates, call 210/224-9299.

**O U C H !**

Young professionals in big Texas cities are working to squelch their **Texas accents** in hopes of furthering their careers. *The Dallas Morning News* reports as the global village grows increasingly intimate, American workers are being penalized for deviating from Standard American English. That means that, at least in big business, the Texas twang, the Southern drawl and the Boston brogue are out. What used to unite families, cities and regions may sound unintelligible to the client on the other side of the world, as well as to the person in the cubicle next door. A Texas accent in Texas has actually become noticeable, one speech pathologist said.

**W I L D L I F E**

**Fossil Rim Wildlife Center** near **Glen Rose** announced the birth of three Mexican **gray wolves**, the most endangered and genetically distinct subspecies of gray wolf in North America. The Mexican gray wolf suffered near extermination during the early part of this cen-

tury, due to human encroachment and predator controls. The pups represent Fossil Rim's first successful contribution to cooperative efforts between the U.S. and Mexico to regenerate the species, presently extinct in the wild. This season's recovery program produced 29 surviving pups in the U.S., adding to a total population of 200 Mexican wolves existing in captivity. Open daily at 2155 County Road 2008. Call 254/897-2960 for details.

**? TEXAS TRIVIA**

**Who coined the phrase, "Fort Worth, where the West begins"?**

In 1891 an 11-year-old boy in Carlton, Texas, left school to work odd jobs to support his family. At age 25 he moved to Fort Worth and went to work for the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*. Amnon G. Carter went on to become the best friend Cowtown ever had. Over the years, Carter worked diligently to publicize the city and promote its growth. In 1936 he sponsored the Texas Frontier Centennial, Fort Worth's observance of the state's 100th year. He established the city's first radio station, which later became the first television station in the South and Southwest. Because of his work, big business moved in, skyscrapers were built and the area's first airplane flew in. He contributed to hospitals and civic centers, and established the Amnon G. Carter Foundation to benefit cultural and educational programs. Carter created the slogan "Fort Worth, where the West begins" to draw national attention to his adopted hometown.

**TEXAS TRIVIA**



**AN INSIDE LOOK** The **Imagisphere Children's Museum** has relocated to **North Hills Mall in North Richland Hills**. Kids can become **make-believe pioneers in a rustic log cabin, drive an ambulance to the hospital's ER, study the X rays of animals in a mini-vet clinic, and experience the sounds and scents of the rain forests**. With the move came an additional **4,700 square feet, making way for a gravity maze, sound exhibit, earthquake exhibit and an area for toddlers**. Call **817/589-9000** or visit **www.imagisphere.org**.

**H I S T O R Y**

In 1996, the **Texas Historical Commission** confirmed the site of **Fort St. Louis**, the short-lived stronghold founded in 1685 by French nobleman Renè Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle. Eight iron cannons, documented in French manuscripts and Spanish archives, were found less than two feet underground on a ranch in **Victoria County**, several miles upstream from Lavaca Bay. Preparations are now under way for excavation of the site, scheduled to begin March 2000. Officials anticipate uncovering the remains of the French fort, a cemetery, thousands of French artifacts and the remains of a later Spanish presidio. For details, call 512/463-5863.

The Texas Historical Commission reports nine of 23 historic **Texas flags**, stored for decades at the Texas State Library and Archives, have returned to Austin after undergoing restoration in Maryland. The flags are directly connected to important people and events in Texas history,

including the battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto and Hood's legendary Texas Brigade. One silk banner was carried by Santa Anna's battalion as they stormed the Alamo. The entire restoration project will cost an estimated \$300,000. Call 512/936-2241 for more info.

**M U S E U M S**

A \$175,000 contribution to **The Science Place in Dallas** will go toward development of **Rescue Unit**, a new interactive display to help children better understand what happens in an emergency. The shell of an ambulance in the KidsPlace exhibit area will offer kids the chance to role-play in various health care professions. Children can learn about the technology of lifesaving equipment and see how paramedics work when seconds count. Opening of the exhibit is planned for fall of next year. Open daily, 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., at the Grand Avenue entrance to Fair Park. For details, call 214/428-5555.

TRAVEL CENTER	Month Visitors	Percent Variation*	Visitors Year-to-date	Percent Variation*
<b>Amarillo</b>	16,434	-5.52	87,963	+5.91
<b>Anthony</b>	10,122	-30.97	71,220	-25.52
<b>Denison</b>	27,243	+15.20	150,792	+10.45
<b>Gainesville</b>	36,339	+1.25	224,259	+6.45
<b>Langtry</b>	7,191	+5.18	58,218	-13.16
<b>Laredo</b>	10,086	-11.78	60,699	-31.43
<b>Orange</b>	51,318	-10.82	309,015	-7.25
<b>Texarkana</b>	56,643	+25.65	261,891	+8.12
<b>Valley</b>	13,785	-30.78	228,891	+2.37
<b>Waskom</b>	54,471	-2.11	272,301	-18.72
<b>Wichita Falls</b>	23,640	-10.34	126,945	-1.32
<b>Capitol Complex</b>	8,250	-20.89	70,266	+5.83
<b>CENTER TOTALS</b>	315,522	-2.87	1,922,460	-4.38

	This Mo.	Y-T-D
<b>Mail Services</b>	103,360	859,366
<b>Literature Distributed at Trade Shows</b>	0	12,600
<b>Automated Attendant Road Condition Calls</b>	4,750	90,158


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\*Compared to last year

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